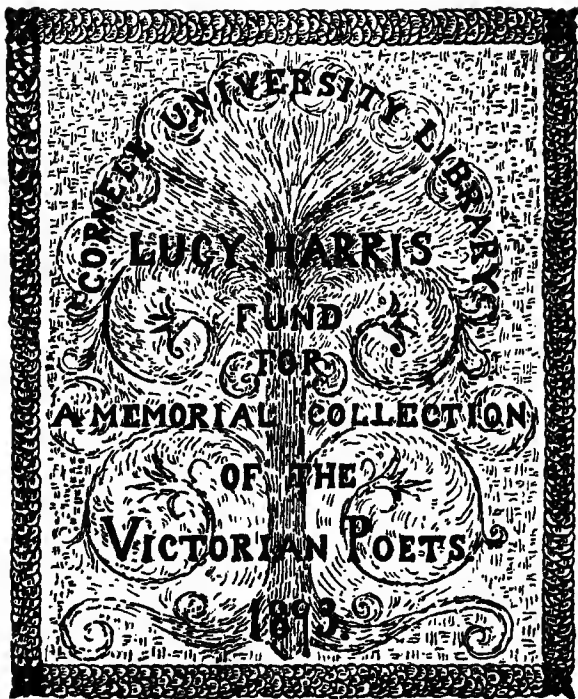


LA VITA MIA

A SONNET CHAIN





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A SONNET CHAIN

 Printed by the constraining desire, long resisted, of
a Poet Friend, but only for Friends.

'Contentus paucis lectoribus.'

Ὅτε γέγονα ἀνὴρ, κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου.

LA VITA MIA

A SONNET CHAIN

IN LINKS OF LIFE AND THOUGHT

BY

W. H.

[Hastie, William]

Spät erklingt was früh erklang,
Glück und Unglück wird Gesang.

Was im Leben uns verdriesst,
Man im Bilde gern genießt.

GOETHE.

EDINBURGH

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

1896

SE volete saper la vita mia,
Studiando io sto lungo da tutti gli uomini ;
Ed ho imparato piu theologia in questi giorni,
Che nelle scuole fatto io non avria.

LETTOR, tu dei pensar che, senza ardire,
Senza affanno soffrir, l'uomo non puote
Fama acquistar, ne gran cose fornire.

ὙΓΙΕΙΑ, πρεσβίστα μακάρων,
Μετὰ σεῦ ναίειμι
Το λειπόμενον βιοτᾶς.
Σὺ δ' ἔμοι πρόφρων σύνοικος εἶης . . .
Ἦ εἴ τις ἄλλα θεόθεν ἀνθρώποις τέρψις,
'Η πόνων ἀμπνοὰ πέφανται,
Μετὰ σείο, μακαρ' Ὑγίεια,
Τέθηλε πάντα, καὶ λάμπει Χαρίτων ἔαρ,
Σέθεν δὲ χωρὶς οὐ τις εὐδαίμων.

A. 241584

C. + H.
JANUARY 4, 1807. JANUARY 4, 1890.

MY MOTHER.

These to *her* memory,
I dedicate, I consecrate with tears.

HEU QUANTO MINUS EST
CUM RELIQUIS VERSARI,
QUAM TUI
MEMINISSE!

LOVE took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands ;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

LOVE took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with
might ;
Smote the chord of Self, that trembling, pass'd in music out of
sight.

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PROEM

OFT have I vexed myself with jealous fears,
Lest thou should grow unfaithful to old Love,
And shifting changes of the fickle years
Should thee from thy deep steadfastness remove.
When I have seen how Time's destroying Hand
Hath slacked the cement of our common clay,
And loosed the knitted strength of social band
To bid dividing selfishness bear sway—
Then have I trembled lest the Age's show
Might with its empty glitter lure thine eye;
But now, consoled, again thy heart I know
Beating with all its warm, quick sympathy.
O take it then for deepest love that I
Can think no change in thee although I die!

UPWARDS

A DAY of joy planned under changing skies
By kind souls bent to charm our gloom away
And stir still upland life to swifter play—
At length it dawned and burst with bright surprise
Robing fair Nature in her richest guise;
While all her summer strength upon her lay !
All light in heart we met, and wildly gay
We clomb the ancient hills, our bold emprise:
And Nature looked a Queen, in realm of old,
Who leads the children up the palace stair
And shows 'neath crystal dome her jewels rare ;
They, all bewildered with such blaze untold,
But ope their eyes and laugh and clap their hands,
While the Imperial Mother smiling stands !

SUMMIT

THE noontide glory of the earth and air,
Clothing their myriad forms in radiant sheen,
Streamed in through every sense till sense had been
Cloyed, had desire not roused within her lair;
And when we could no higher, we lay there
In one linked ring upon the crest of green
And feasted as if served by elves unseen,
While song and happy laughter stilled our care.
But when the fuller fire began to run,
We played with flying touch, and danced at ease,
And shouted welcome to each wandering breeze;
And so we grew together all in one,
And difference blended in the wingèd hours,
For Nature's joy and freedom then were ours.

OLYMPIC

WE moved like gods upon the Olympian height
Met for high revel in their ether halls,
Whom Grecian shepherds girt by Tempe's walls
Descry afar through all the mid-air bright :
JUNO, white-armed and bland, eyed clear as light,
PROSERPINE, gayer where free breath is drawn,
MINERVA, VENUS, VESTA, THEMIS, DAWN,
HEBE, fleet DIAN, THETIS, IRIS slight.
Nor wanting manly forms to match with these :
JOVE mindful of the lightning, PLUTO full
Of mirth, when now released from ghostly rule;
Dark MARS, rough PAN, and brawny HERCULES,
Love-vest APOLLO, helpful MERCURY,
And rosy GANYMEDE all filled with glee !

HOMEWARDS

WHEN darkling shadows fell with eastward rills,
Our mirth sank gradual and we took the sign;
And down the mount we sped in winding line
While deeper sense from settling air distils.
And yet a holier awe our spirit fills
As the red orb rolled down the sky's decline
And sank behind our homes, a form divine
Flinging his farewell gold athwart the hills.
Then by the marge of the low placid lake
We lingered in the breathless calm to spy
The mirrored nuptial of the earth and sky ;
And then we parted—devious ways to take—
Yet sure this day will not forgotten lie :
Nature is ours—her joy will never die !

THE ATTACK

A STREAK of flickering day—then gloom'd the Night
And slowly, sternly drew her sable pall
Over the face of Nature, hiding all
Her witching beauty from the eager sight;
And gathering thicker still, like ravens' flight,
The black clouds blot the moon and stars, and small
Specks grow to shapeless bulks that flit or crawl
O'er graves in scorn of day's swift myriads bright.
Then roamed I wildly through the night of fear,
Groping in darkness with a trembling hand,
Mid wide-strewn chaos of my palaced land,
That all so late had shone in sunlight clear!
O changeful fate! O feeble life's brief breath!
Shall all time's glittering joys be spoil of Death?

MY NURSE

A SOFT white hand would find me wandering free,
A low sweet voice would break the dumb, murk air,
A sleepless eye would glance like starlight rare,
And then the phantom shapes would shift and flee:
Hand, voice and eye so long well known to me—
Touch, tone and look above all others fair,
And warmed with life-long love and watchful care
That years abate not—serving perfectly!
Dear Mother! smit by time and envious fate,
Yet breathing sweeter fragrance from the blows,
God shall reward thee where His amaranth grows!
O teach me still to love thee soon and late—
Like thee to bear my griefs without a sigh—
And move with thy sublime humility!

RECOVERY

SWEET is the breath of spring to frost-bit earth—
Sweet is the freshening shower to parchèd ground—
Sweet is cool eve to panting day, with sound
Of beasts and birds and bees and insect mirth :
Sweet to the mother is her first young birth—
Sweet to the father is a lost son found—
Sweet to the labourer when the toilsome round
Of days brings restful sabbath to his hearth.
But sweeter far than these or fabled wealth
Is the first cool in fevered blood again
With sovereign, clear possession of the brain !
Once more I feel the bounding pulse of health,
The world through every sense fresh beauty streams
And all my fancy fills with hope's young dreams !

THANKSGIVING

ETERNAL LIFE ! whose Being so transcends
Our finite thought even at its highest noon,
That our weak spirits, dazzled, faint and swoon
When Thy unclouded brightness o'er us bends !
Thou, through the power which infinite extends,
In strangely moulded dust hast breathed Thy breath,
And lest the creature ape Thy right, set Death
With iron hand to rule the life that ends !
Forgive all weakness in the hour of fear !
Forgive all doubtings in the dread of doom !
Forgive all blindness in the depths of gloom !
Renew the will with life's new current clear !
Renew the thought to search new mystery !
Renew the power to shape new worlds with Thee !

HOME.

MUCH have I roamed in other lands renowned,
 Sating a boyhood's dream of cities fine,
 Fair France, low Holland quaint, the storied Rhine,
 And Alpine peaks by snows eternal crowned;
 Much have I wandered o'er Thought's haunted ground,
 Burning in soul to reach truth's diamond mine,
 Or catch from Wisdom's lips a spell divine
 To ope the world's shut mystery profound:
 And oft I've yielded to the varied charm
 Of nature, art, gay city, pillared dome,
 The boisterous Bursch, deep sage, wild war's alarm,
 And hoary learning stored in Pythian tome;
 Yet here I sit with soul more pleased and warm
 Amid the sweet simplicities of Home.

BOYHOOD

My soul is like a hive of humming bees
All stirred by warm light from spring's opening sky,
Till buzzing forth the film-winged tenants fly
And fill the air with smell of honey-lees;
So through my brain swarm early memories
Waked from the cold, dim cells where they did lie,
And flitting round and round in phantasy,
Old scenes I see—as one who dreaming sees :
The lowly roof where life's first breath I drew;
Young playmates—gone, or strangers grown as men;
Long golden days—aye fresh when all was new,
Nor dimmed by dream of world beyond the glen;
The changing sports that winged the seasoned year:
All these again I view in fancy clear.

HAYMAKING AMONG THE HILLS

How sweet it is to watch through casement clear
The busy haymakers athwart the fields,
Reaping the simple growth the upland yields,
And gathering all the harvest of our year :
Grey sires and matrons mong the throng appear ;
The lusty mower swings the flashing scythe ;
Brisk youths and buxom girls and children blythe
With gleeful toil the towering hayricks rear.
A softer sunlight fills the heath-crowned glen ;
A brighter radiance floods the bending skies ;
A happier hum swells eve's low, dreamlike sound ;
The year's glad fulness joyeth beasts and men ;
While, from a thousand altars ranged, doth rise
The sweet-breathed incense of the grateful ground !

MENNOCK

MENNOCK ! once more I view thy heathy dell
In all its autumn flush of purple pride,
Nor is there spot in this wide world beside
Can weave around my soul so soft a spell :
Thessalian Tempé—famed Arcadian glade—
The glaciated gorge—the dizzy Alpine ledge,
Vaucluse, Val d'Arno, Rhine, the storm-scooped edge
Of Highland glen—all these before thee fade !
Thy silver stream moans to my beating heart ;
This honeyed thyme of tread light-footed breathes ;
That wee wren's trilling voice can peace impart ;
Yon clustered foxglove love's first blushes wreathes ;
Thy gentle beauties my worn soul restore ;
Dear Nature grants thee still—nor ask I more !

AN INFANT SCHOOL

RANGED rows of chubby faces deep embrowned,
Like oaken leaves, by the spent summer sun;
Bright glancing eyes that, swift as lightnings, run
From point to point flashing on all around:
Ranged restless hands and feet, like prisoners bound ;
All shades of joy, grief, emulation, fun,
Hard tasks fulfilled, or careless left undone,
The many failing—few by victory crowned.
Say, can a grander sight the seasons bring ?
Whole man in miniature.—Nay, are not these
Fairer than rising stars, or sun, or moon,
Or the first notes of the first bird's sweet tune,
Or dew on April flowers, or bursting trees,
Or all the multitudinous life of spring ?

EXPIATION

HARK ! loudly peals the simple Sabbath bell,
Breaking the breathless calm of upland air,
And wending slowly to the House of Prayer,
The lowly pass their week of sin to tell.
Doth not God's smiling Day proclaim, ' 'Tis well ? ' '
But lo ! from yonder Hall yon flaunting pair
Hurry for respite from their restless care,
And hie o'er muir and hill and heathy fell !
They drown the pleading sounds with babbling tongue
In vain ; since ne'er for idle truant moods
Hath duteous Nature spread her solitudes.
And ye, the Kingdom's children, who have wrung
Heaven's pity, waiting bread with hungering eyes,
Oh, may your purer lives appease the skies !

EPITHALAMIAL. to J. J. M.

DEAR Friend, who sowd'st the love in boyhood's prime
That grew and flowered in youth's bright opening day,
Nor wholly withered while thou wert away
Spending the toilsome years in tropic clime :
Right glad we welcomed thee, when circling time
With thy return our loss and care did pay,
And oft, though grieved, we charmed the hour's decay
With memories old, new tales, and snatch of rhyme.
Again we bid thee speed ! Again with tears !
Though passing now to realms of conquer'd peace;
And may this fairest Flower of all thy years
Console time's spoil and bid his sorrows cease !
God speed thy way ! Our love no changing fears :
Old love shall live through all its young increase !

PALLIDA MORS

I LOVED—with love that knew yet naught of death
 But grew mid home's mild air and sweet control ;
I lost—but stilled the grief with childlike faith
 That crowned, above the stars, the white-robed soul.
I loved—with love from manhood's beauty caught,
 And joyed to watch one ample spirit's range ;
I lost—but lull'd the pain with deathless thought
 That in the All-soul soared o'er chance and change.
I loved—with love in life's first breath inbreathed,
 And deep inwrought in all life's growth and power ;
And still as years that brow with silver wreathed
 The more I loved the brave heart's noble dower ;
I lost—nor bore the soul that mortal stroke,
But fell, as falls the ivy with the oak !

A BIRTHDAY. To Dr J. M.

DEAR venerated Friend ! whom God's strong hand
Hath shielded all these long and changeful years,
Through youth's bright prime, through war's wild
 frays and fears,
Then lead from fevered isle to native land
To spend life's evening 'mong the quiet hills,
Loved haunts in boyhood fourscore years ago !
Thy life as pure as our sweet mountain rills,
Yet strong and fertile as a river's flow:
We gaze with love and wonder o'er it now !
The century's wisdom is thy rare rich dower ;
Thy memories shine like ivy round a tower ;
Truth, honour, gentleness illumine thy brow,
And floods of kindness all thy deep heart fill;
We pledge thee yet again : God bless thee still !

IN MEMORIAM E. M.

A FRAGILE stem from fervid tropic glow,
 Wafted to bloom in dim cold northern air,
 And charm with early gleams of beauty rare,
A sweet warm floweret oped in fields of snow.
A life-day gliding softly through each hour
 From blossom bright to fruit's rich golden crown;
 Aye meek, pure, fragrant, bending sweetly down
To willing service in love's quickening power.
Toiling to give—not seeking to receive;
 Typing heaven's law beneath the changing skies;
 Viewing earth's stir and strife through gentlest eyes!
Fading at length mid mingling lights of eve,
 Till all God's gift of love shed forth on men,
 The Giver gently plucked His flower again!

ENNUI

'MUCH study is a weariness.'—Ah true !
And ever truer with the toiling years,
As Time's step-mother hand unresting rears
The rank world-thought the growing ages through.
'And of the making books there is no end ;'
Though blades must writhe through choking tares and
weeds,
Yet in lush Autumn yellow stalks will bend,
And teeming wombs will cast perforce their seeds.
Through Winter's darkened days I sought but peace
To sift with toilsome hand the garnered grain,
And oft wild joy would thrill my weary brain,
Clutching like miser's gold the year's increase ;
But when I strove my gain in whole to draw,
I sighed with bankrupt pain o'er chaff and straw !

NEC QUIDQUAM PRODEST AERIAS
TENTASSE DOMOS

I FED my soul with lofty thoughts and pure,
Drawn from the azure depth and world-expanse
By spirits, who swept the heaven with eagle glance
And passed the bounds which time and space immure:
Ideal Plato's deep, eternal Thought—

The keen-eyed Stagyrte's rich reasoned lore—
The dim-eyed dreams in twilight ages taught—
The rising sunshine brightening more and more :
And all the wealth of old thought-laden years,
And all the strength of our new strong-will'd time,
I thought to gather in youth's hopeful prime,
And with it rise beyond earth's toil and tears;
But as I soared aloft, with pinion free,
Unwinged I fell mid life's vext, surgy sea !

LABOR IRRITUS

By stern Time borne to front the loud world-din,
And called by Fate to play the manful part,
The soul, weak, incomplete, nor strong within
To shape life's formless mass with formful art;
Like Io restless roamed with secret pain,
Rolling like Sisyphus the fatal stone,
Snatching like Tantalus at pleasures shown,
Ixion's wheel revolving in the brain.
Ever more wayward, fitful, drooping, void,
The first fresh glow of feeling all outworn,
Low-eyed despondency alterned with pride,
Keen-stinged remorse with apathetic scorn;
Thought, feeling, will, waging their endless strife,
Marring the joy, gnawing the strength of life.

THEOLOGIA MODERNA

I SOUGHT for refuge in the sacred fane
Far from the world's fierce strife and chafing roar,
And deem'd with vestal calm and prophet-lore
To still the throbbing heart and burning brain ;
And dreamed the beatific vision plain
Would break at last with earth's dark struggle o'er,
And in the sweet air of that halcyon shore
New love would grow, old selfishness would wane.
Alas, for hope ! far other scene I found—
The dread Shekinah quenched—the altars cold—
A palsied priesthood drivelling dotard sound,
Or rending maniac-like the faith of old—
While impious rabbles quaffed the sacred wine,
And danced wild revel round the kindled shrine.

JAM, JAM DO MANUS SCIENTIAE

I woo'd a love—the Sun's bright daughter fair ;
Her eyes were stars with quivering lids around ;
The crescent moon her brow's white lustre crowned,
And raven night tressed up her wavy hair ;
Her cheeks were blossomed flowers, rose-bright and
 rare ;
Rich pearls within her proud curved lips were found ;
All symmetry in those soft limbs lay bound,
Which mother-earth had reared with fondest care.
The fire and lightning were her handmaids made ;
Homage from all she claimed but rendered none ;
With life's dread mystery she careless play'd,
And still she grew more fair to gaze upon :
When at her feet I kneeled in wild despair—
She but blew glittering bubbles through the air !

VANITAS VANITATUM !

THEN did the way-worn soul, at dead of night,
Sigh to the fainting heart in breathings low :
‘ Poor heart ! Now cease with iron fate to fight,
Nor longer force the useless blood to flow ;
Love is but vain desire with blinded eyes ;
Beauty—putrescent glimmer round decay ;
Goodness—a bubble blown by tearful sighs ;
Nature—a hollow mask of painted clay ;
Truth—polar gleams of shifting hues and forms ;
Thought—vain brain-ferment stirred by fancy’s yeast ;
Society—a knot of battening worms ;
The Christ—a skeleton at Coptic feast ;
The year’s work naught from birth till life’s extreme :
For Man is but a shadow—God a dream ! ’

STRANDED

STRANDED within the girding harbour bar,
When every sail was set to catch the breeze,
And the long-dreaded terrors of the seas
'Neath clearing skies had still'd their stormy war :
Stranded with all the freight of near and far,
Gathered through days that scorned dull homefed ease,
Compass and chart and lithe-limbed crew with these,
To thwart each gale, to mark each glinting star :
Stranded when hope had to her highest flown,
The deep-sunk anchor weighed 'mong buzzing crowds,
To sweep for richer lands o'er ocean wide ;
Now swayed in gloom by the slow-ebbing tide ;
While through the idle flapping of the shrouds,
The night-wind sighs with low presageful moan.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

‘Βλέπομεν ἄρτι . . . ἐν ἀινίγματι.’

I DREAMED a dream within a dream, and lay
Watching the visioned loveliness from far;
Three heavenly forms to dark earth hied their way
Adown the slant white beams of morning's star :
Not fired by envy, like the wanton three
Who strove on Ida for vain beauty's prize;
Nor weakling Graces with light languid eyes—
Thalia, Aglaia, and Euphrosyne.
Faith eyed with mystic glance Night's fading train;
The breaking Orient drew Hope's eager sight;
And Love with look divine that dimmed the twain,
Shed o'er divided men the rising light :
But when rose dawn's light touch my stillness broke,
I writhed through troubled dreams—and sighing woke !

NATURA NATURATA

A LONELY house, begirt with mountains high,
Where primal Nature holds eternal sway
In shade and shower and sun, through night and day,
O'er crag and fell, and stream and scaur and sky.
Within, the same deep powers subdue the eye
In painted floor, rough wall, and bold array
Of homely thrift, and the still peaceful way
Of her, the soul of this simplicity.
Dear Matron, formed by sixty mirrored years,
Let me behold thy look of calm again,
Such holy beauty glorifies the glen;
A new earth round thy being bright appears;
Nature hath perfected her work in thee,
And stirred new faith and hope and love in me.

VOCATIO EXTERNA

' WE call you in the Name we most revere,
And by the power which we must all obey;
We need you for far work, which many a day
Has ceased to prosper. Go, be strong, nor fear !'
I struggled; for my wish was serving here
My own loved land, and deeper love held sway
In sweetest bonds—yet these I cast away,
Taking the Cross for all I held most dear.
I followed, but would wear no chain. Free will
I asked, to work : agreed, my praise they spread.
But when the doctor, hearkening Death, said : No !
Again they gathered, counselled, called me still,
But asked me, if I feared ? I only said :
' Death has no terror now, and I will go.'

CONSECRATION

THEN take my life, O Lord, since I have failed
To compass cherished purpose of my own;
Now that the first proud dreams of youth are flown
With all the barren years in vain bewailed.
Ne'er be my heart again by doubts assailed !
Let me but follow where Thy path is known,
However blind, or faint, or maimed, or lone—
Though all the reason still is kept unveiled.
For I but yield what Thou hast given to me;
Nor ask I wealth, or power, or joy, or fame,
But fruitage such alone as Christ will claim ;
Then grant me of His spirit large increase:
The courage that ne'er flees, nor fears surcease;
The trust that comes from yielding all to Thee.

AFLOAT

AND now the wan moon faints on morn's chill breast,
And through the Orient bars the quenchless fire
Shoots up in golden spears the Day's desire,
And gilds each crispy wavelet's flickering crest.
Again my heart awakes, and deeper rest
Dawns with the calm its trembling chords require,
And all its pulses renovate, aspire
To nobler doing, and to life more blest :
All past the parting grief and anxious fears !
Then stay your wantonness, ye wandering Winds,
And waft me swift o'er ocean's purpling foam !
Dear Friends, again farewell ! Even through my tears
Your love inspires the larger love that finds
All men my brothers, all the world my home.

MAL DE MER

HAS Nature lost her fixture and her law ?
Do all things flow ? Does nothing firm remain ?
Has Chaos won once more his ancient reign,
All form and beauty sunk in Night's black maw ?
Stop, stop this ceaseless tossing ! Tiger's claw
Were mercy to such inner grip of pain !
This belching nausea, demon winds, waves, rain,
What hideous horrors from hell's depths ye draw !
All life is loathsome, all things out of joint,
All woe, all pain, nor strength, nor hope, nor weal;
Surely the bitterness of Death is past!
Oh for one foot of land, the least fixt point,
That I might yet my soul one moment feel,
Before it sink to nothing in the vast !

BAY OF BISCAY

OH ! Hark ! ' Swish—Swash ! ' O God, we sink at last !
In blinding flash and roar all faces pale !
Mid Nature's titan war can man avail ?
The ship reels, creaks, strains, shakes from hull to mast,
Rolls, turns, and tosses in the swelter vast ;
Waves, skies, mount, sink and seethe mid wildest
wail—

But nay, hold fast ; the storm does not prevail ;
The mighty surge that swept the deck is past.
Brave hearts, whom wrecking Death can not appal,
Well done ! Firm held on Night's black track forlorn
Through boiling hells our tottering speck is borne :
Till with the glint of dawning rings the cry,
Land ! Land ! and red, strained, wistful eyes descry
The glistening, grateful cliffs of Portugal.

THE MEDITERRANEAN

Is this the Mediterranean, opening wide
Maternal arms to fold me to her heart ?
Before her sunny smile all fears depart,
And only faith and hope and love abide.
Again my bosom swells with boyish pride
At Trojan war, brave Sparta, Athens' art,
And Rome, Gaul, Carthage, Spain ; yea, still apart
The hero's pillars here through which we glide.
O Mother of the free, whose sons first learned
The birthright which they bore to Thule far,
Crowning with peace and right barbarian war :
Receive me to thy heart, who long have yearned,
Like him who fought ten years and wandered ten,
To see the cities, know the mind of men.

PORT SAID

AN ampler sky of deepest fixèd blue,—
A crystal dome whose far sunk pillars bear
The ancient firmanent—o'erarching fair,
Which stars and gods and heavenly host looked through;
The Land of Nile, the Pharaohs' grave, in view ;
The desert of the wanderings—yellow, bare ;
And that thin watery way, outstretching there.
Dividing the old worlds to bind the new !
Last node of nations with their mingled stench ;
The pivot of their politics and lies ;
Black women veiled with furtive languorous eyes ;
Turks, Arabs, Greeks, Italians, English, French,
Sand, bricks, shops, offal, dogs—together hurled :
Satanic centre of a warring world !

RED SEA

THE moon of Israel's Passover again
Full, clear and keen, as when Jehovah's might
Set free His people through that fateful night,
When Egypt's brute-gods and first-born were slain :
God's glory shines as bright on wave and plain,
As when the cleft sea saved His children quite,
When Pharaoh's battled host was swept from sight,
And yonder shore re-echoed Miriam's strain.
Nay, brighter shines that glory round me now,
And higher pæans in the moonbeams play,
For fear, and hate, and strife are driven away ;
While through the glimmering distance Sinai's brow
Gives, with the strength of the Eternal Law,
My midnight Passover a holier awe.

BAB-EL-MANDEB

A MUFFLED voice awoke me whispering low :
 ' Our ship has missed her course, sways o'er the reef ;'
I only felt, in strangely sweet relief,
The pause of grinding motion blissful grow.
Through gloom yon sunk hull's spectral fingers show
 The murderous rocks, of all earth's wreckers chief ;
Jagged jaws of Death tell tales of tearful grief,
Writ red by vengeful Nature, nurse of woe.
All day we churn the brine, writhe, strive in vain,
 Till helpful hawsers, with the tumbling tide,
Bring longed-for rescue, and away we glide !
All joy and progress come from conquered pain !
 We shout our scorn of Death, forget our fears,
With glad hearts sweeping through the Gate of Tears !

INDIAN OCEAN

So day by day we sail and sail unworn,
To East, to East, towards the depths of dawn,
By all the mystic magic beauty drawn,
That sleeps beneath the eyelids of the Morn.
For never can our faith yet view in scorn
The dusky Orient's glamour, nor would fawn
Upon the pride that blindly holds in pawn
The jewell'd truths which still her brow adorn.
And so we sail the slumberous summer seas,
While bland air breathes the peace of halcyon days,
And cloudless skies reflect old Ocean's smile :
The flying fish disports, the dolphin plays ;
And now comes wafted on the glowing breeze
The first faint fragrance of the Spicy Isle !

INDIA

INDIAN LIFE

INDIAN WORK, ETC.

[*Sonnets reserved*]

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TO A SYMPATHETIC FRIEND

As to a ship-wreck'd voyager afar,
Mid billowy breakers struggling faint and lone,
With myriad midnight deathforms round him strewn,
Breaks through a rift of cloud the Polar star;
As to a wounded soldier whom red war,
The burst of glory past, hath crushed and thrown
To fever's clutch and pain's compulsive moan,
Comes the soft hand that soothes his burning scar :
So, Friend, thy words of light and healing come
To soothe and guide me in my grief and pain,
And my low heart is stirr'd to hope again.
Thine is the faith that strikes all murmuring dumb;
Thine the strong soul that conquers things below;
Be thine the bliss that crowns all conquer'd woe !

THE SNOW

IN MEMORIAM A.A.H.

THE silent snow hath fallen in the night
And robed in spotless pureness the dead earth;
Nor e'er did rosy morn see fairer birth,
Than this transfigured Death in sheeted white;
For all the outward dark is chang'd to bright,
And peace and love brood placid o'er the hearth;
The very children pausing in their mirth,
Do eye in strange amaze the solemn sight.
So did I lately see my loved one lie,
And with the morn my night of grief was o'er,
For beauteous Death did drive away my fear ;
So be it with me too when I come to die,
When my still'd heart shall feel my wrongs no more,
All passed the storms and ravage of my year.

LIFE AND WORK

I ROSE while slow the morn was dawning grey,
And saw that all earth's beauty could expire ;
Dark mists hung round the mountain's shrivell'd spire,
The spotted snow was melting into clay ;
And with me rose the din of life's affray,
The brawny blacksmith smote his sparks of fire,
Dull rough-shod labour struggled through the mire,
And Man and sullen Nature stood at bay.
The duteous housewives bustled round the doors ;
 The fresh kempt children rushed along to school,
 In playful strife and mimic vanity.
In vain the sky its liquid fury pours ;
 Through stress and storm strides on to perfect rule,
 The strain of life in new humanity.

TO A NEAPOLITAN POET

STANDS old Soracte still all white with snow?
And bend the labouring trees 'neath white attire?
And do the rivers stagnate and retire,
As when Horatius Flaccus saw them so?
Do men still gather as the winters flow,
Around the crackling of the log-piled fire,
While draughts Falernian cheerful thoughts inspire?
Do maidens love and laugh as long ago?
It must be so, for in our northern land,
Where winter rules with colder, sterner sway,
He still brings back unchanged his ancient charm;
The seasons come and go at Time's command,
Yet new is old, and old is new to-day;
Our skies are cold, but all our hearts are warm.

DOUBLE LIFE

TO A. L., NAPLES

It is not good for man to be alone !
 No, nor for woman either ! Single life
 Is treason to the universe, made rife
With beauty's forms from sweetest unions grown.
It is not good to live love's depths unknown,
 To waste life's gift divine in selfish strife,
 Without the helpmeet in the perfect wife,
To make man's larger, nobler self his own.
It is not good for man or woman fair
 To dwindle down in loneliness, or sink
 From high seraphic rapture to a clod ;
But it is good to climb Heaven's golden stair,
 Not twain but one in love's sweet mystic link,
 Through rhythmic heart-throbs beating back to God.

TOTAL ECLIPSE

CAUGHT at the full in cloudless eastern sky,
When joying to illumine the darken'd race,
The stealthy shadow creeps athwart her face,
And dims and stains her ravish'd beauty high.
And as the blackness of the midnight lie
Blots out the life and love she lived to trace,
She reddens in the shame of her disgrace,
And faints from wrong in inward agony.
Yet soon the circling of the restless spheres
Brings back the lord of light to heal her pain,
And forth she moves majestic, bright and free.
But all in vain for me revolve the years ;
Still doth the wrong of my eclipse remain,
Nor doth the gloomy shadow pass from me.

January 23, 1888.

KANT'S ETHICS

GREAT Master of my Student days, once more
I thread the tangled thickets of thy page,
And trace thy patient steps from stage to stage,
That all the paths of Reason would explore.
Thy clear, pure spirit lifts my spirit o'er
Space, time, sense, self to thought serene and sage :
God, Freedom, Immortality, the gage
Of highest, truest, noblest life in store.
They call thee stern, judaic, loveless, cold ;
Yet I again with thee would reverent live,
And learn to bear Time's pain and Death's rude shock!
With thee communing would again grow bold,
Would build my house once more upon the rock,
Safeguarded by thy stern Imperative !

HEGEL'S ÆSTHETICS

I FOUND our college Hegel, after years
Of absence, as I left him on the shelf,
Thick-dusted, stroked with jottings by myself,
Like hatchet marks of jungle pioneers !
And all talked glib of Hegel now : praise—jeers
On every lip ! Sphinx, knave ! All gold, all pelf !
Hegelians fought like Ghibelline and Guelph,
And his unbending rigour strained the seers.
One day I scaled his granite peaks scarped, frore,
And found the bright blue flower hid in the shade,
That soothed his harshness, my forget-me-not.
A sprig of beauty deep, I homeward bore,
Transplanting softly. Let it bloom or fade,
Till I win strength and leisure for new thought !

DORDRECHT

I WENT to Dort, for so we call the town,
And hoped to find it as it was of old;
Night showed me glaring shops, e'en virtue sold,
Till Ary Scheffer's statue seemed to frown.
At dawn I sought the Churches gaunt and brown,
And found but empty spaces bare and cold;
They showed me old clasped Bibles, plate of gold,
And summed their utmost price in stivers down !
I sought the preachers; in a courteous way
They wondered that I sought for Truth so far :
They talked of May Day, Social Questions, ' Reds,'
Of Kuenen, want of pastors, their poor pay;
But when I mentioned God's decrees—Gomar—
The Synod—shrugged their shoulders, shook their
heads.

REMBRANDT'S LESSON IN ANATOMY

A SUDDEN flash, a pause, a thrill of joy—
And all the master's thought was clear revealed ;
And that deep truth in beauty long concealed,
Was born in thought, which time will not destroy.
'Mong streaming thousands, like a thoughtless boy;
I oft had sought the spell its colours wield;
But only gazed as beasts stare on a field,
Nor could the higher, finer sight employ.
But now I brought a deeper sense of things,
As I went hurrying to it through the Hague,
A life by death unveiled in light and shade;
And when I turned I seemed to feel soft wings,
A strange new yearning, a sensation vague,
Of some still grander truth that will not fade.

THE BIRTH OF BEAUTY

I FELL a-dreaming when the night was young,
And boldly passed within the golden gate,
Where myriad mystic forms stood ranged in state,
With all the deep-eyed poets who have sung ;
I dream'd that Beauty's hour of birth was rung,
And all on strain with yearning eyes did wait,
To see the secret hid of ancient Fate,
And all the doors of mystery open flung.
And every star flash'd out its purest ray,
And rhythmic orbs danced round in tuneful choir,
Till all that lived in earth, and sea, and sky,
Gave all their fruitful strength dark Death to slay,
And Space and Time brought forth in living fire
The Soul of Love, Man's Immortality.

SLEEP AND THOUGHT

I WOKE within the silence of the night,
Nor could I lull the Soul to sleep again ;
A higher life was stirring in the brain,
And Thought chased darkness with its inward light ;
I marvell'd that my heart still beat aright,
Though all forgetful I for hours had lain ;
I wondered that the world did yet remain,
Though all its forms had perished from my sight.
A world all new I found in Thought's deep day,
And brighter stars shone through my fancy clear,
Nor space nor time shut out immensity ;
I lost the changeful self of sense and clay,
Yet swept with soaring wing from sphere to sphere,
And lived anew in God's eternity.

MY MOTHER DEAD

My mother dead ! And yet I shed no tear !
I sit benumbed, nor can I feel my pain !
I strove to wrest her from Death's grasp in vain ;
His wrath more fell the more I held her dear !
Thou, Death, alone art king, the god we fear ;
All others but mere phantoms of the brain,
Vain worshipt, which thou one by one hast slain,
Dragged at thy chariot wheels in triumph here.
O Death, I hate thee, with the fiercest hate
Of man of woman born. Then smite me, give
Me peace ! More cruel far, thou letst me live !
Yet from thy cruelty I wrench my fate,
And snatch this soothing for my bleeding sore :
My wrongs and woes will ne'er disturb her more !

O FOR A TEARFUL MUSE

O FOR a tearful muse that I might sing
Like Milton, Shelley, Julian Fane, and moan
In music sweet ! But I sit dumb and lone,
As widowed bird by harrowed nest in spring !
Oh that I could the brush of Rembrandt bring,
That I might set her crowned upon Love's throne,
And see her beauty, grace, and splendour shown
Like jewels on the forehead of a king !
Yet do I hear strange strains below my breath,
And through my gloom a light ethereal springs :
Lo ! Saints to greet her coming reverent rise ;
A white-robed throng around her wave their wings ;
The angels hymn her praise with sweetest eyes ;
Her presence gladdens all the Realm of Death !

HER MORTAL BURDEN

WE bore away towards her own loved hills
Her mortal burden, and re-oped our grave ;
And tender hands and hearts all sorrowing, gave
Their help and tears, till all my void heart fills ;
And loud the stormy Winter shrieks and shrills,
As through the glen the mountain spirits rave
In wildest grief—all impotent to save,
Or bring the balm that human anguish stills.
But in my bitter cup one sweet is blent
As I go mourning for her love so dear,
And darkling grope for comfort year by year :
While others cursed me, hated, mocked, reviled,
Her purer, holier soul best knew her child,
And with my ways and doings was content.

MY DEAD ARE WITH ME STILL

My dead are with me still : they are not dead !

I see them in my dreams; I catch their smile ;

Their memories sweet my lonely hours beguile;

And all my life is by their wisdom led.

They live, they live the larger life o'erhead,

But I in straits and darkness move the while,

And drag my weary feet for many a mile,

Through thorns and briars with pained and bleeding
tread.

O loved ones, in the bosom of your God,

God of the living not the dead, who lives

For ever, and His life for ever gives :

Ye pure and glorified, in the abode

Where tears are wiped away, no sorrows are.

May I your spirit-joy ne'er cloud, nor mar.

THE FIRST SWALLOW

I DREAMED that life and beauty ceased to be
As deadly winter bound the earth in cold,
And wrapped Cimmerian gloom in fold on fold
O'er all the year's bright forms of flower and tree;
I deem'd that truth and love had died to me,
That men were but the slaves of lust' and gold,
And women falsest masks of painted mould,
And I but longed for death's simplicity.
Then through my window the May morning burned,
And a low whispering caught my waken'd ear,
And a swift gleam sped through the softening air;
I started at the sudden vision fair;
'Twas the first swallow twittering, fluttering near,
And all my heart did thrill : Returned ! Returned !

LOVE AND DEATH

OLD Death hath lost his terror and his sting,
 Since I have learned that life and love are one,
 And that unloved God's living were undone,
Nor from His work in me could profit spring.
I fear not death, nor aught that death can bring,
 Night's hand unweaving all bright day hath spun,
 Nor pall, nor clay, nor worm, nor blotted sun,
Nor memory of the wrongs my heart yet wring.
It is not death, but loveless life I fear,
 That death of death in mortal nothingness,
 The weary void of lone futurity !
Then give me Death to quicken life's arrear,
 And Time's inconstancy itself shall bless,
 When Love is bound in Death's security.

G O D

I SEARCHED in Self to find life's secret power,
The silent purpose in the maze of things,
But traced in vain the failing, fruitless springs
Of feeling, thought, and will—man's natal dower.
I viewed Society from my lone watch-tower,
And marked the glory, power, and grace it brings ;
But found that wit and wealth and fame take wings,
Earth's brightest genius glowing but an hour.
I turned to God, and light flashed forth on all :
I found in chaos order, life in death,
Deep love in strife, sweet joy in parting breath ;
A mystery woven through earth's tangled ball ;
The meanest things in human life sublime ;
Each moment's birth eternal thought in time !

NATURA NATURANS

From dim fire-cloud to living, conscious souls,
Through formless void, dark chaos, struggling light,
Æons untold, march'd on with thunderous might,
The all-conquering Power that still through all things
 rolls.

And every sun between Heaven's utmost poles,
And every orb that roundeth day and night,
And every mote that crowds all depth and height,
The plastic Power in every pulse controls.

And fuller, fairer, freer Life was made,
 Not less but more with every wonder done,
 Creator, Changer, Saviour link'd in One :
And all the myriad forms in time displayed
 By conquering Life, unfold the eternal plan,
 From nebulous haze to crowning, godlike Man.

TOTALITY

Ἐν καὶ Πᾶν.

THAT 'all is one and one is all' stands clear;
The mystery of the Infinite is plain
In man and woman, birth, death, joy and pain,
In beast and flower and stone and rolling sphere;
And 'all that was and is and shall be here,'
No longer but a riddle of the brain,
Nor space and time unsolved enigmas vain,
When one and all behind the veil appear.
The Infinite is finite else 'twere naught,
The finite infinite in endless change
Of all and one through being's boundless range;
The world with full variety is fraught,
That beauty, truth, and good may ne'er decay,
And man and God be one and all for aye!

AMOR INTELLECTUALIS

At last I feel a love which will not fade,
Not fickle, weak, like that of womankind,
More fixt than hate, enduring with the mind,
Serene, supreme, on strength supernal stay'd :
A love of Love's own Being full displayed,
That holds embraced dark Death and pain entwined
With Nature's beauty—ill with good combined ;
That gave and gives itself to all things made.
The Love that blends sphere music with earth's jars ;
That all man's toil and tears with bliss hath crowned ;
Whose glory glows where'er a martyr trod ;
Whose faith and hope make graveyards holy ground :
'The Love that moves the sun and all the stars,'
And streams eternal from the Heart of God.

L'ENVOY

JAMQUE PEDEM REFERENS

THUS have I wiled away my idle hours,
Winding round casual thought the sonnet's chain,
Though all unknown the mighty masters' powers
Whose love and grief once sung for aye remain :
Love-fired Petrarca and the Italian band—
Impassion'd Shakespeare breathing love half-told—
Milton serene—clear Wordsworth—Keats sweet-soul'd
And those who still the full stringed lyre command.
Before their spell I fall, like artist rude
Who chipp'd crude stone or daub'd in colour'd shows,
Till suddenly by perfect art subdued,
Where priceless marble breathes and canvas glows,
Abashed and shamed his own rough work casts by,
And suns his soul in all that beauty high !

APPENDIX

ITALIAN TRANSLATIONS OF PP. 43, 58, 45.

LA NEVE

(dall' inglese)

ALTA è la notte, la neve caduta
Invola alla vista la gelida terra
E triste, silente l'avvolge, la serra
In bianco funèbre disteso mantel.

Eppur nessun'alba più bella si vide,
La pace, l'amore ci scendono in core,
E i bimbi stupiti di tanto bagliore
Lor giuochi suspendon, intenti a guardar.

Così la mia bella pur vidi giacere
In bianco lenzuolo; la notte fuggiva;
Al roseo mattino il cielo si apriva
E il cor rallegrato m'apprese a sperar.

Così, quando l'ora suprema mi arrivi,
Gli affanni e le pene ponendo in obbligo,
Col cuore contrito, impavido anch'io
In placida notte morire vorrò.

V. L.

LA PRIMA RONDINE

(dall' inglese)

SOGNAI vita e beltade insieme spente
Quando il morente verno ricopriva
Del suo ammanto la terra ed avvolgeva
In cimmeria notte e fiori e piante.
Spenta del vero e dell'amor credetti
Per me la sacra face, di sue voglie
Schiavo mi parve ogni uomo, e di dipinta
Argilla tristi maschere le donne,
E, scoraggiato, affranto ogni momento
Del sepolcro chiedea l'eterna pace.
Quando una luce tremola, un pallore
Di sol nascente mi ferì lo sguardo...
Oh dolce vision ! Già spunta l'alba
Alba d'aprile, lieta e sorridente !
Con batter d'ali ed un garrir gentile
Ecco la rondinella che ritorna !
Ed io grido alla Vita al Bello al Vero,
Ritornate voi pure, ora ci credo.

V. L.

NIL SUB SOLE NOVI

(dall' inglese)

È ANCOR di nevi al vecchio Soratte onusto il fianco ?
Curvansi ancora gli alberi sotto il lor manto bianco ?
Scompariscono i fiumi, o gelansi in cammino,
Così come a' suoi tempi cantava il Venosino ?
La gente attorno al foco s' accoglie ancor, nel verno,
Mitigando la bruma coi nappi del falerno ?
Amano le donzelle, sorridon come pria,
Ravvivando fra gli uomini l'amor, la poesia ?
Certo, così dev'essere; poichè nel suol del norte
L'inverno, ch'ivi regna, più rigido e più forte,
Per solito costume, per suo perenne vanto,
Radduce ognor l'antico non variato incanto
S'alternan le stagioni, senza mutar mai tempre;
Il nuovo è sempre vecchio, il vecchio è nuovo sempre,
Però l'esterno ghiaccio cela secreti ardori :
Son freddi i nostri climi; son caldi i nostri cuori.

CARLO DE FERRARIIS

SONNET

FROM RAJA INDRA CHANDRA SINGH, BAHADOOR

BRAVE soldier of the Cross ! Undaunted knight
Of Scotland's Church ! Whom not the fiercest hate
Of Antichrist, with victory elate,
Nor banded faction's persecuting spite,
Could turn from what thou deem'st the cause of right !
Though heavy trials and afflictions great
Still on the high-soul'd Christian hero wait,
Flinch not, for thine's the cause of truth and light !
And so were persecuted they—in sooth,
The prophets ; and so Jesus had his share
Of sufferings, crowned upon the cross at close !
Is not the martyr's blood the seed of truth ?
With patience, then, thy tribulations bear,
E'en till thy crown of thorns to glory grows !

I, C. SINGH.

Calcutta, *April* 1885.

[The sonnet on p. 42 entitled 'To a Sympathetic Friend,' was a reply to this sonnet.]



